

OCTOBER 13, 1977

Texas livestock truckers were granted a 20 percent rate increase a week ago on sheep. Some two years back, the freight had been raised on cattle. The news reports said the truckers were having a terrible time buying tires and gasoline. Times had been so hard, I was surprised to hear they had the credit to ask the price of tires and gasoline.

Our fall lambs were so light that I thought about mailing them to market. The Mertzon post office once was a big receiving point for mail-order baby chickens. Before the women folks dropped chicken raising in favor of beauty parlors and bridge parties, during April the post office smelled like a feed store.

Mail runs were small in those days. The old girl in charge of the window got in an awful mood in the spring. She'd be sitting on a stool trying to do her fingernails or read a movie magazine. Over behind the sorting table, 500 or 600 baby chickens scratched and peeped and generally made themselves unpopular. By closing time, postmarks came out deeper than the tattoos on a sailor's arm. The purchase of a three cent stamp was a dangerous transaction.

I never have been able to keep the freight rate straight from the ranch to San Angelo. Last check I has was 90 cents a mile on short loads in a gooseneck. I didn't feel that was out of line. In the hottest part of August, we paid wet Mexicans over \$6 a mile to grub prickly pear. The only return we received from that expense was the amount of pear they tipped over going from the camp to the shade trees.

The main objection to truckers making more money is that pretty soon the herders are going to be the last poor people left in the Shortgrass Country. It's just reasonable that when we see the truck drivers eating hamburgers and drinking beer, we are going to be jealous.

One thing for sure, the government isn't going to have to worry about busing folks around out here to assure an economic balance of the population. The most certain thing in our country is that everyone is granted an equal opportunity to go broke.

It's a shame the rate increase didn't come in time for us to see the effects of the increase. Most of the livestock haulers left are getting disaster loans to feed their lead goats. Every dry day it's easier to sympathize with the downtrodden. Winter is going to last a long time this year.